



July 16, 2002

Mr. Wiley B. McAfee
Police Legal Advisor
City of Irving Police Department
P.O. Box 152288
Irving, Texas 75015-2288

OR2002-3887

Dear Mr. McAfee:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 165726.

The City of Irving (the “city”) received requests for information concerning eight calls made by the police to a specific location as well as a copy of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement license of a named peace officer. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We begin by addressing your contention that the requested peace officer license is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. Section 143.089 of the Local Government Code provides in pertinent part:

(a) The director [of the fire fighters’ or police officers’ civil service] or the director’s designee shall maintain a personnel file on each fire fighter and police officer. The personnel file must contain any letter, memorandum, or document relating to:

...

(2) any misconduct by the fire fighter or police officer if the letter, memorandum, or document is from the employing department and if the misconduct resulted in disciplinary action by the employing department in accordance with this chapter

. . . .

(g) A fire or police department may maintain a personnel file on a fire fighter or police officer employed by the department for the department's use, but the department may not release any information contained in the department file to any agency or person requesting information relating to a fire fighter or police officer. The department shall refer to the director or the director's designee a person or agency that requests information that is maintained in the fire fighter's or police officer's personnel file.

Thus, section 143.089 of the Local Government Code provides for the creation of two personnel files for police officers and fire fighters: one that must be maintained by the city's civil service director or his designee and another that may be maintained by the city's fire and police departments. Information contained in personnel files maintained by the civil service director in accordance with chapter 143, including all records from the employing police department relating to misconduct by police officers that resulted in disciplinary action, must be released to the public unless the information comes within one of the Public Information Act's exceptions to required public disclosure. However, information contained in a personnel file held by the police department is confidential pursuant to section 143.089(g) and may not be disclosed under the Act.

You indicate that the submitted peace officer license is maintained by the city police department in its personnel files. Based on your statements and our review of the submitted information, we agree that the submitted peace officer license is confidential under section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code to the extent the information is maintained solely in the city police department's personnel files. However, to the extent the submitted peace officer license is also maintained in the city service personnel file, the license is not confidential under section 143.089(g) and must be released.

Next, we address your contention that the remainder of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108 provides, in part,

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

- (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime; [or]
- (2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in a conviction or deferred adjudication

A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain, if the responsive information does not do so on its face, how and why section 552.108 is applicable. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977); Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2-3 (1986). Section 552.108(a)(2) protects information pertaining to a closed case that did not result in a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See* Open Records Decision No. 216 (1978) (addressing applicability of statutory predecessor to closed cases).

You contend that the information at issue “concerns investigations that *have not* resulted in conviction or deferred adjudication, and therefore, is excepted from public disclosure under” section 552.108. However, you do not adequately demonstrate that the information relates to a case that has reached a final result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Furthermore, you do not adequately demonstrate how the release of the information would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution efforts. Consequently, the city may not withhold the information relating to the dispatches under section 552.108(a)(1) or section 552.108(a)(2). Because you have raised no other exceptions to the disclosure of this information, we find that the city must release it.

In summary, the city must withhold the submitted peace officer license under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code to the extent the license is maintained solely in the city police department's personnel files. However, to the extent the submitted peace officer license is also maintained in the civil service's personnel files, the license is not confidential and must be released. The city must release the remainder of the submitted information.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days.

Id. § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Nathan E. Bowden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NEB/sdk

Ref: ID# 165726

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Melvin Tomlinson
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Watauga, Texas 76148
(w/o enclosures)